

USS GUAM (LPH-9) CY-83 HISTORY

PRE-DEPLOYMENT SEA PERIODS: Several underway periods, 11 JUNE (Type Training), 27-29 July (Type Training), 1-3 August (pre-INSURV sea trials), 9 August (INSURV), and 24-24 August, preceded work ups. USS GUAM got underway 29 August -16 September for Mediterranean Amphibious Ready Group (MARG) 1-84 work-ups off Cherry Point, North Carolina. In company with USS GUAM were the four other ships of MARG 1-84; USS TRENTON (LPD-14), USS FORT SNELLING (LSD-31), USS MANITOWOC (LST-1180), USS BARNSTABLE COUNTY (LST-1197). The ships and Marines performed amphibious exercises during that period, highlighted by carrier qualification training with AV-8 Harrier aircraft.

FINAL DEPLOYMENT PREPS: Final cruise preparations were made in Norfolk 17 SEPT-17 OCT. The 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit (22 MAU) and Helicopter Medium Marine Squadron (HMM-261) unloaded pierside in Norfolk on 17 October.

UNDERWAY, MARG 1-84: On 18 October USS GUAM departed Norfolk for exercise CRISEX 84 at Huelva, Spain, to be followed by a SIXTHFLT assignment in the Beirut OPAREA. The TRANSLANT was to become everything but routine. The elements of MARG 1-84 and embarked 22 MAU were to receive international visibility on 25 October 1983 for their participation in the US/Caribbean Nations action against insurgent Cuban Communist forces on the island of Grenada - Operation URGENT FURY. On 21 October USS GUAM was diverted to proceed southbound at best speed to the Caribbean. Two days later, MARG 1-84 was directed to Grenada, tasked to prepare for an amphibious assault in a non-permissive environment and advised to be prepared to conduct Noncombatant Evacuation Operations of US citizens. MARG 1-84 ships steamed in close formation, at total darken ship, with radios and radars silenced during the transit to Grenada.

ENROUTE GRENADA: With only four days to prepare, the ship began round-the-clock planning under the leadership of Captain J.M. QUARTERMAN, JR. The departments readied themselves for combat. To a great extent the success of the ship can be attributed to relentless predeployment efforts to prepare the ship for its role as the MARG 1-84 flagship. The crew was molded into a well trained, well prepared fighting unit, meeting and exceeding numerous readiness milestone requirements. Constant command attention was given to critical areas including personnel, material, and supply readiness. Achievement of these goals were a large part of the success in preparing the ship for combat. Passing Barbados, enroute Grenada, Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf, Commander Second Fleet, and staff were embarked. USS GUAM was designated flagship for Commander Joint Task Force One Two Zero. On 24 October USS GUAM arrived at the eastern shores of the island country of Grenada. Condition III was set at 2200. Strategy for the invasion involved the quick capture of key positions on the island and the liberation, without harm, of US medical students from the medical college. Planned action was use of ships, helicopters, boats, and ground forces to encircle the island and clear opposing forces from fortified positions. USS GUAM's multiplicative roll is described in the following. Other unit interaction is also described for continuity.

GRENADA OPS OVERVIEW: From the first pre-dawn D-Day opposed amphibious assault on 25 October 1983, until the completion of the back load of the Battalion Landing Team 2/8 on 2 November 1983, USS GUAM performed in an exemplary manner

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contributing significantly to the Navy/Marine corps successes in Operation URGENT FURY. Flight Operations included four heli-borne opposed assaults, two of which took place at night, plus numerous MEDEVACS and insertion operations. The war environment required extensive landings and refuelings of US Army helicopters whose pilots were untrained for shipboard operations. There were no mishaps or injuries related to flight deck actions. HMM-261 lost two AH-1T Cobra and one CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters in combat action. 305.4 flight hours were flown from USS GUAM's deck by HMM-261 during the first 43 hours of the opposed assault and a total of 725.1 hours were flown during the seven days of the operation. 76 wounded were treated onboard USS GUAM without loss of life. 3134 passengers and 660,310 pounds of cargo were transported from USS GUAM's deck.

CASUALTIES RECEIVING AND PROCESSING: Early on the first day (0650Z 25 OCT 83) the first of many casualties to be received that day arrived in a battle damaged Army H-60 Black Hawk helicopter. The wounded pilot was unable to shut down his engines due to the battle damage. USS GUAM's quick thinking flight deck crew used a fire hose to drown the engine and secure the aircraft. The pilot of the Army helicopter was the first of 76 wounded who arrived at USS GUAM's deck to be treated and MEDEVACED to other medical facilities. The wounded were flown onboard USS GUAM in Army, Navy, and Marine Corps helicopters. They were met on the flight deck by stretcher bearers who took them via the aft aircraft elevator to a triage area on the hangar bay. The wounded then received pre-operative treatment and were hoisted up to Sick Bay for eventual care in one of the operating rooms. Upon stabilization, the wounded were transported to Salinas Airfield, Grenada, or USS Independence (CV-62) and from there to hospitals in Puerto Rico and the United States. The wounded were mostly Army and Marine Corps members but included several Cubans and Grenadans (including one little girl, age 11, wounded incidentally). All were successfully treated. There were no fatalities among those arriving onboard for treatment.

SHIP'S SUPPORTING ACTIONS: Communications were heavily complicated by requirements to support COMMANDER JOINT TASK FORCE ONE TWO ZERO, COMPHIBRON FOUR, TWO TWO MAU, and HMM-261. The addition of two "suitcase" radios by CJTF 120 and the State Department was required to support command and control from USS GUAM for the entire operation.

Also contributing to USS GUAM's success in Grenada was the Supply Department's action to maintain a continuous feeding capability to meet the operational demands of a crew of over 650 plus 1800 Marines ashore. Further, parts support for ship and aircraft were provided continuously. Resupply arrangements were created through Barbados, USS Independence, and eventually USAF MAC support.

USS GUAM's engineering plant ran smoothly during the operation with no problems.

One innovation developed in Grenada to counter the threat of guerilla attack on the ship was the expansion of the Self Defense Force. Six 50 caliber machine gun emplacements, two M-60 positions, and a rifle and grenade launcher position were established around the ship. The force could be called away and manned at a moments notice and was controlled from Combat Information Center.

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: Pre-dawn D-Day 25 October 1983, USS GUAM's crew launched a 21 aircraft heli-borne D-Day assault while underway on the east side of the island. Brief time was 0100; the first wave lifted from the deck at 0320 to meet a 0530 L-Hour with lead combat elements of 2nd Battalion Landing Team, 8th Marines inserted near Pearls Airfield. Resistance was light and sporadic as the helicopters drew automatic weapons and anti-aircraft artillery fire which was suppressed by the escort AH-1T Cobra gunships. By 0900 the reserve company helolift, encountering no resistance, had been completed into LZ Oriole. The Cobras continued to fly close air support missions for both the Marine and US Army units ashore. They successfully used their TOW missiles to destroy 2 houses which contained a 90MM recoilless rifle and several machine guns which threatened US Army units. Several of the enemy attempted to escape the burning building in a truck which was also destroyed by a TOW missile.

Later that day, 2 Cobra gunships departed USS GUAM at approximately 1240 for further tasking. USS GUAM's Helicopter Direction Center directed them to proceed south to the Salines Airport area to provide close air support and armed reconnaissance for a US Army Ranger unit which was engaged in heavy combat and had no other supporting arms available.

Arriving on station at approximately 1300, the Cobra flight (EM-30 and EM-32) was requested to conduct an armed reconnaissance in the vicinity of St. Georges Harbor. As the section proceeded with the mission and flew over the southern entrance of the harbor, EM-32 was hit by multiple antiaircraft artillery (AAA) projectiles and forced down. One of the two pilots was rescued by an CH-46E from HMM 261. The crew of the H-46 went in for the rescue under the covering fire of EM-30. The AH-1T engaged the AAA site at close range in order to protect EM-10's departure. Purposefully remaining behind until the rescue aircraft got outside the effective range of the enemy weapon, the AH-1T was hit with multiple rounds of AAA fire and crashed into the water just outside the harbor with loss of both pilots.

Upon return to USS GUAM, the rescued pilot was treated for a shrapnel wound in his neck. His right leg's upper tibia was fractured in fourteen places. A traumatic right forearm injury required a below the elbow amputation.

The missing pilot's body was recovered the following day when it was handed over to the Marines in the vicinity of St. Georges Harbor. It is suspected that he was shot during or following his capture by an unknown enemy force while attempting to distract them away from the injured pilot mentioned above. The wreckage of EM-30 was later discovered and the bodies of the pilots were recovered by U.S. Navy divers.

During the late afternoon and early evening (25 OCT), USS GUAM steamed from her position on the east side of the island around the southern tip to a position on the west side of the island. USS Trenton remained on the east side to act as a refueling and rearming station for those forces remaining at Pearls Airport, and provided medical services as required.

The capture of enemy positions at Grand Mal was to be a coordinated assault on 25 October 1983 from tracked surface vehicle assaults launched from other MARG 1-84 ships plus a leap-frog heli-borne assault with helos from USS GUAM lifting troops from Pearls. FORT SNELLING, MANITOWOC, and BARNSTABLE COUNTY circled the island to the north for the amphibious landing on the west side. The initial brief was at 1300. At 1400 the fourteen helicopter assault launched from the deck of USS GUAM and rendezvoused at Pearls Airfield (on the

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east side of the island). Under the threat of incoming mortar fire and approaching enemy armored personnel carriers, the flight was scrambled to get airborne twice, necessitating a refueling cycle onboard USS GUAM and rejoining at Pearls Airfield by 1830. Following a 2000 brief, the flight was on call to reposition the reserve company to the southwest side of the island. At 0400 (26 October 1983), the lead flight lifted from Pearls Airfield; 0450 was L-Hour for the lead elements to be in the landing zone at Grand Mal. No resistance was encountered as the landing zone was secured earlier by tracked surface assault. The aircraft recovered onboard and USS GUAM remained on the west side of the island for the next five days.

The Grand Anse Beach Rescue heli-borne assault on 26 October 1983 involved launching a 15 aircraft mandatory mission from USS GUAM to rescue Grand Anse Medical College American students who had barricaded themselves in a dormitory near the beach. They were surrounded by opposing enemy forces. At 1630 (L-Hour), HMM-261 inserted lead security elements of the 2nd Battalion, 75th (US Army) Rangers, evacuated 231 noncombatants (including students, dependents and Grenadian nationals) and extracted the Ranger covering force. Resistance was heavy and included small arms, heavy automatic weapons, and mortar fire. Cobra gunships firing TOW missiles destroyed several machine gun and small arms positions located in three houses overlooking the beach. In addition to HMM 261 Cobra support, USAF AC-130 (Spectre) and USN A-7 aircraft were on station and were coordinated to provide suppressive fire. Three HMM-261 helicopters sustained battle damage, with one aircraft sustaining strike damage. By 2000 all functioning aircraft recovered onboard USS GUAM.

From 27-30 October Marines ashore liberated most of the island with GUAM providing logistic support as required. US Army personnel liberated the remaining area around the southern end of the island. USS GUAM continued to provide the Army with medical services and helicopter refueling services.

On October 30th, General Vessey, Chairman of the Joint Chief's of Staff and Admiral W. L. McDonald, Commander and Chief US Atlantic Fleet arrived onboard for a two day meeting. Final plans were made to turnover MARG 1-84 duties to US Army units and newly arrived USS SAIPAN (LHA-2).

In her final tasking in this action, USS GUAM launched a 15 plane pre-dawn heli-borne assault on 1 November 1983 to liberate the island of Carriacou located 15 miles north of Grenada. Subsequent to the 0200 brief, the first wave lifted from USS GUAM's deck at 0430 and inserted the lead combat elements of 2nd Battalion Landing Team, 8th Marines at 0530 (L-Hour) into the small landing strip located in the southwest corner of the island. Cobra gunships from USS GUAM provided Forward Air Control (Airborne) services for two flights of A-6's and two flights of A-7's, acted as the Naval Gunfire spotters, and escorted the assault transport helicopters. Later, they conducted an armed visual reconnaissance of Carriacou and the smaller neighboring islands. No resistance was encountered.

USS GUAM concluded Grenada operations on 2 November after backloading the Carriacou assault having been relieved by USS Saipan (LHA-2).

ENROUTE MEDITERRANEAN: USS GUAM departed the Caribbean and proceeded towards the Mediterranean on 2 November. The SOA was 16kts and all ships steamed in close formation at total EMCON. The weather was good for the entire crossing. INCHOP with Sixth Fleet was on 11 November.

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ARRIVAL BEIRUT OPAREA: USS GUAM relieved USS IWO JIMA (LPH-2) 17-19 November after putting 22 MAU ashore to take security positions at Beirut International Airport in Beirut, Lebanon. The ship began continuous Condition III steaming upon arrival on station.

BEIRUT AREA OPERATIONS OVERVIEW: Commander Task Force Six One (Augmented) and Commander Sixth Fleet Battle Staff, conducted embarked combat operations onboard flagship USS GUAM during the Beirut phase of this deployment. USS GUAM assumed all the responsibilities of support for 22 MAU, entrenched in Beirut, Lebanon, while maintaining Condition III (wartime cruising) for 46 days under serious terrorist threat. The ship and crew maintained the highest state of readiness for every contingency throughout by finely tuning the fast response Self Defense Force. Threat recognition and reaction training and coordination were drilled at regular intervals. USS GUAM's ability to react positively and quickly to unidentified and potentially hostile contacts involving four actual General Quarters, sixteen Self Defense Force calls, and activation of Rules of Engagement without incident is indicative of the extremely high standards, total dedication to excellence and the professional pride of the crew.

FLIGHT OPERATIONS: Daily flight operations in the Beirut area included heavy ops from dawn to dusk into Lebanese landing zones and to other ships in the area providing transportation for personnel, mail, and cargo. Personnel and cargo flights to Larnaca, Cyprus, and Tel Aviv, Israel, were almost a daily occurrence.

LPH OPAREAS: At night USS GUAM operated 15 to 20 miles from the Green Beach landing zone located five miles south of Beirut point. The ships steamed at various speeds no less than eight knots and steered random courses as a precautionary measure. A destroyer escort was assigned daily. During the day, the ship operated 10 to 15 miles from Green Beach to facilitate flight operations.

DECEMBER 83 ENTERTAINMENT: In the month of December, diversion from the operating routine came to USS GUAM in the form of a variety of television, night club and musical entertainers from the United States. Country/Western singer, Loretta Lynn stayed onboard USS GUAM 3-6 December, performing and touring within the task force. Las Vegas performer and singer Wayne Newton visited 14-17 December. Comedian Bob Hope arrived on 23 December, with actresses Brooke Shields and Ann Jillian, television personality Cathy Lee Crosby, Miss USA Julie Hayak, comedian George Kirby, and singer Vic Damone. The USO troupe performed two shows on USS GUAM and toured the task force filming a television show that aired in the United States on 15 January. The Bob Hope tour participated in Christmas celebrations on USS GUAM and indeed made it a very special holiday for everyone especially with services conducted by Archbishop Joseph T. Ryan, Vicar of the Military. The USO troupe departed 27 December. Actor Charlton Heston arrived on New Years Eve for a one night stay, signing autographs and taking pictures into the wee hours of New Years Day 1984.

CONGRESSIONAL VISITS: In December, USS GUAM also hosted several Congressmen on

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fact finding tours of the Beirut area. These were Senators Christopher J. Dodd of Connecticut, Senator Gordon J. Humphrey of New Hampshire, and Representative Gerald B. Soloman of New York.

1983 **ENDS:** USS GUAM continued on station in the Beirut area through the first quarter of the New Year.